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*Sources of Japanese Tradition, vol. 2:
1600 to 2000*

Columbia University Press, New York, 2005

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This is a gargantuan work, almost impossible to review because of the scope of collected materials and the diversity of appended commentaries. The revised edition of volume 1 of *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, which came out in 2001, covered roughly 1,000 years of Japanese historical sources in 524 pages, making it only slightly longer than the original edition. Volume 2, on the other hand, covers only a slightly longer period than the original, with sources ranging from the early seventeenth to the late twentieth century, yet requires 1,399 pages to do so. It is worth asking if the benefits of this “more is more” approach outweigh the disadvantages. I will therefore focus in this review on the degree to which the book fulfills its goals, on the related issue of the volume’s projected usefulness for readers, and lastly, on what the constitution of the book reveals about the state of Japanese history as a field.

The preface explains that while the original edition of *Sources of Japanese Tradition* consisted of a single volume that was later divided into two paperback volumes along the modern/premodern line, this revised edition “reflects the increasing recognition in both the West and Asia that major factors in the modernization process stemmed from indigenous, pre-nineteenth-century developments” (xxxv). This claim surprised me. First, it seems like an inaccurate characterization of the original edition, which divided the volumes not at the Meiji Restoration but in the eighteenth century, hardly a conservative separation of traditional and modern Japan. Second, the desire to decouple modernization from Westernization, particularly in undergraduate education, is now almost a given in the field, illustrated by the fact that most textbooks devoted to modern Japan begin their narratives in the sixteenth century.

The preface also explains that “educational works have been given particular attention” in the revised edition, which implies a move away from the top-down, great-men-of-history approach that characterized the original edition (and, of course, the very field of historical studies in the period of its compilation). This implication is belied, however, by the “Chronology,” which for the most part focuses (as

did the timeline in the original edition) entirely on the accomplishments of Very Important People in early modern and modern Japanese history. Why did the authors include the death of “Kaiho Seiryō (1755-1817), a rationalist thinker,” but exclude every uprising from the early nineteenth century? No one expects radical epistemology in a volume titled *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, but in some ways the framing of the book seems disconnected from recent developments in Japanese historical scholarship.

The translation and exegesis of primary texts, on the other hand, is superlative, and for researchers and advanced undergraduates, at least, this will make the revised edition a vital resource. A few examples from the early modern period should suffice to illustrate the changes. Willem Boot, who has written elsewhere about Tokugawa Ieyasu’s deification, greatly expands on the handful of Ieyasu-related texts in the original edition by including relevant excerpts from *Mikawa monogatari* and *Tokugawa jikki*, as well as letters by a Tokugawa vassal, an enemy, and a religious advisor, all of which are here translated into English for the first time. Every section of the book has been expanded and improved in similar fashion, with longer entries and more texts, and in some cases, entirely new contributions. J. S. A. Elisonas’s “The Evangelic Furnace: Japan’s First Encounter with the West,” for example, devotes forty pages to translations of European and Japanese documents and their historical context, while the original edition devoted only a few pages to Nobunaga’s and Hideyoshi’s reactions to Christianity. Elisonas’s erudite explanations and translations in “A Christian Critique of Shinto” and “A Buddhist Refutation of Christianity” will, I think, prove exceedingly useful as handouts in many college classrooms. Another interesting new section focuses on intellectual, official, and dramatic responses to the Akō Vendetta, which is likewise likely to be popular with undergraduates and to help deconstruct some of the assumptions students bring to the classroom about “the way of the warrior” in premodern Japan.

The sections devoted to modern Japan in the pre-war, wartime, and postwar eras also contain reams of newly translated materials that will be of great use in introductory courses, such as the survey I am teaching as I write, titled “Modern Japan.” (The publication of a two-part abridged paperback version makes this a particularly convenient text.) All in all, the coverage of the 268 years of the Tokugawa period in the first half of the book (known in the confusing series parlance as “Part Four,” a designation that seems to emerge from the assumption that all readers

will own both volumes), takes up 664 pages. By my calculations, that means that the book averages about 2.5 pages per year of the early modern period. The second section ("Part Five") of the book, on the other hand, takes 355 pages to examine the period from 1868 to 1945, which averages out at about 4.5 pages per year. Postwar Japan, which is the subject of the third section ("Part Six") of the book, merits only 94 pages, or about 1.7 pages per year, though if we add the somewhat incongruous 195 pages of the fourth section ("Part Seven"), "Aspects of the Modern Experience," postwar Japan receives about 5.3 pages per year. Just for fun, compare these numbers to those of the first volume in the revised series, which as mentioned above narrates approximately a millennium of Japanese history in a mere 524 pages, giving us approximately 1/2 page devoted to each year of "premodern" Japan.

It would be easy to explain these discrepancies in terms of the availability and interest of primary sources. My interpretation, however, is that they instead reveal the collision of two potent hierarchies in the field of Japanese history today. First, sources for the study of intellectual history are by far the most common documents in the collection. Why is more than half of the Tokugawa section focused exclusively on Confucianism, National Learning, or other topics in intellectual history, a field that has already been well documented and translated in the previous *Sources*, in monographs and articles, and in other anthologies such as Haruo Shirane's recent *Early Modern Japanese Literature*? One might also ask why topics such as visual culture, sexuality, and the status system, which have been explored in compelling fashion in recent years in the English literature, are lacking? Second, historiographical and political texts are surprisingly prominent in the sections on the twentieth century considering the huge range of materials that are available for translation. Why are 85 pages devoted to a comprehensive litany of modern history writing in Japan, a fascinating subject, to be sure, but one that perhaps deserves its own stand-alone collection? Any translation of and commentary on historical sources is of course welcome in a field in which such resources are few and far between, but I can't help but wonder if the heft of this book is partly due to editors who couldn't cut back on texts from their own specialized areas of interest.

Editing an anthology is a thankless job, but in the case of *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, the resulting book has an unusually large impact on the field. If the lifetime of the original edition is any indication, I may still be referring to these translations when I

retire from teaching in the 2030s, if not beyond. This inspires me to offer a few suggestions that I hope could be implemented in future printings. First, authorship should be indicated for every text in the book, including the preface and numerous transitional essays. Undergraduates who are struggling to master citation systems are deeply confused by passages like "The Tokugawa Peace" (1-6) that bear no attribution. Second, clear typographical distinction should be made between the translated primary texts and the comments of the scholars who worked so hard to produce this book. I cannot count the number of times I did a double-take upon suddenly realizing that the "voice" I was reading was not that of a historical figure but a contemporary scholar, or vice versa. Usage of the same typeface produces unnecessary confusion among undergraduates, who are fighting to keep up with unfamiliar names and dates and thus may mistake the explanation of Albert Craig for the writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi.

Despite some minor flaws, this book contains a wealth of primary sources that have been expertly translated and framed. The divided and abridged paperback version, in particular, will prove useful in the classroom.